

Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 01108 131942Z

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SUBJ: BAHAMIAN REACTION TO BICENTENNIAL

REF: STATE 169682

1. JULY 4 WEEK MERELY HIGHLIGHT OF YEAR-LONG CELEBRATION BY GCOB AND BAHAMIAN PEOPLE OF U.S. BICENTENNIAL WHICH HAS BEEN TYPIFIED BY GCOB-SUPPLIED BUMPER STICKERS BEARING U.S. AND BAHAMIAN FLAGS AND PROCLAIMING "WE CAUGHT THE SPIRIT." DURING WEEK SANDWICHED BETWEEN JULY 4 AND BAHAMIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY JULY 10 THEME HAS, OF COURSE, BEEN BAHAMIAN-AMERICAN CONNECTION WITH STRESS ON SHARED RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL TRADITIONS. WHILE PROMOTION OF BICENTENNIAL, PARTICULARLY LAVISH SUPPORT BY MINISTRY OF TOURISM, IS MOTIVATED IN PART BY DESIRE TO KEEP TRADITIONAL FLOW OF AMERICAN TOURISTS FROM BEING TOO HEAVILY DIVERTED TO TRAVEL WITHIN U.S. THIS YEAR, WARMTH OF BAHAMIAN AFFECTION FOR U.S. PERMEATES ITS EVERY FACET. OFTEN-HEARD COMMENT FROM LEADERS AND ORDINARY CITIZENS ALIKE HAS BEEN HOW GOOD IT IS TO SEE AMERICA TAKING PRIDE IN HERSELF AGAIN. GENERALLY EMERGING IMAGE IS ONE OF RENEWED AMERICAN SELF-CONFIDENCE.

2. IN ADDITION TO USUAL RECEPTIONS, WEEK WAS MARKED BY VERY SUCCESSFUL PORT VISIT JULY 3 - 5 BY USS BLAKELY (FF 1070), JULY 4 SUPPER AND SHOW BY HOLIDAY INN STAFF AT WHICH SHIP'S CREW AND LARGE EMBASSY CONTINGENT WERE HONORED GUESTS, JULY 4 FIREWORKS DISPLAY OVER PARADISE ISLAND AND HARBOR, EMBASSY-MOUNTED EXHIBIT JULY 1 - 30 AT HIGH SCHOOL HOSTING "YOUTH RECOGNITION MONTH," AND JULY 7 OUTDOOR INTER-DENOM-
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PAGE 02 NASSAU 01108 131942Z

INATIONAL BICENTENNIAL RELIGIOUS SERVICE ATTENDED BY PRIME

MINISTER, OPPOSITION LEADER AND AMBASSADOR.

3. JULY 7 SERVICE WAS BROADCAST NATIONWIDE AS WERE JULY 5 MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR TO SEVERAL THOUSAND AMERICAN RESIDENTS OF BAHAMAS, INTERVIEW WITH AMBASSADOR SAME DATE AND SIX THREE-MINUTE EMBASSY-PRODUCED SEGMENTS ON HISTORY AND MEANING OF REVOLUTION JUNE 28 - JULY 3. JULY 3 HERALD (PLP-ORGAN) WAS SPECIAL BICENTENNIAL ISSUE FEATURING FRONT-PAGE MESSAGE FROM AMBASSADOR, WHILE THIS MONTH'S BAHAMIAN REVIEW MAGAZINE AND ISLANDER (BAHAMASAIR INFLIGHT MAGAZINE) WILL BE FULL-COLOR BICENTENNIAL SPECIALS. BAHAMIANS WITH FULL ACCESS TO AMERICAN RADIO AND TV MOST IMPRESSED WITH DAYLONG JULY 4 COVERAGE.

4. THE PRINCIPLE POINTS WE WOULD NOTE FROM ALL OF THIS ARE THESE:

(A) BAHAMIANS, NORMALLY FRIENDLY TO U.S., HAVE OUTDONE THEMSELVES DURING THE ENTIRE YEAR TO DEMONSTRATE AFFECTION AND REGARD FOR U.S.

(B) THE MAGNITUDE AND NATURE OF THE CELEBRATION IN THE U.S. MUCH IMPRESSED BAHAMIANS WHO INCIDENTALLY SAW THE EXTENSIVE TV COVERAGE.

(C) THE GENERAL THEME FREQUENTLY REPEATED TO AMBASSADOR WAS: WE ARE PROUD OF THE U.S. AND SEE IT AS THE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

5. POST PREPARING END-OF-MONTH AIRGRAM WRAP-UP OF EVENTS AND IMPRESSIONS.

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